



Cruel Procurement

S. LaRue / 02-15

Annie Clark – Introductory Hymn, Epilogue March

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1vxQs84FMWQ>

On the freeway, behind a PINK Prius (not a factory color – either after market or custom ordered) with a COEXIST bumper sticker. He's in the fast lane, going 65. Any other day and my proximity would have alarmed him, his survival instincts would kick-in and he'd get the fuck out of my way, mine and 20 others behind me inching closer every second – we have shit to do – step-aside if you please.

But I hang back, not feeling very aggressive. It looked like he was smoking, I thought it might have been the dreaded Marijuana and I'd not be giving this report had the following not transpired. This is the second time I've seen a Prius pilot flip a lit butt out the window. Baby seat in there too. Jerk.

I changed lanes, let the ¾ Ton Chevy Dually riding MY ass have the fun of crushing him.

*

Hit the post office and the clerk that I used to deal with all the time was weirded out by my appearance. Hadn't seen much of him for 3 or 4 years – not since my vicious ex killed my thriving business out of spite – my shipping duties had fallen to ZERO.

I was dressed nice, my mid-back-length Shirley Temple curls came out perfect, but I wasn't ready for the noonish line to move so quickly and took an extra 20 seconds, had the nerve to ask a question, making sure my package was properly aimed. This gave him time to notice the attempted 1970 Robert Plant hairdo which I'd achieved by throwing my brush out. My shaking had gotten worse and at 60, I'm sure the battles I'd fought as a younger man are starting to show on my face. I wasn't so far gone he didn't remember my name, toss on that plastic “Jesus loves you” smile of his, not knowing I was watching it dissipate more with each step toward him, heard it break like a wine glass when I arrived at his station.

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The drive-thru ATM at the bank was malfunctioning – your card activates the little screen with manicured feminine hands performing a graceful demonstration for you to mimic. But this one is easily moving 10 times faster than usual. Mesmerizing, somehow Orwellian, funny and terrifying. It also demanded you restart the session after each transaction, luckily no one else was waiting to watch this surreal presentation so I took my time – didn't mind the repeat logins due to the experimental short films I got to watch, like GIF files on crank.

*

I'd decided to shop at Smith's – I have a pot of beans going in my wee noggin and there's no trustworthy meat at the Dollar Store.

On the way I see Guitar Center – I'll drop in – check to see if the little switch box I need is available yet – as if I were ahead of, not behind, the curve.

2 inputs with a switch to select one or the other

2 outputs with a switch to select one or the other

It was as if I were asking permission to sacrifice a child in the main showroom.

*

STAPLES, right next door, seemed like it deserved a chance to humiliate me and since I was there, why not? They have cables and shit, so in I go. I swear, the guy that rushes me at the door is under 4 feet tall, begging to help me and he doesn't understand the above description either, only he's wise enough, as the short in stature often are, to realize I don't want any trouble. He sees me as a bewildered old man and leads me to the cables which of course isn't what I want, but happened to have in my hand.

The manager is called, then another employee, all equally puzzled by my request. The 4 of us stand and stare at ***NOT what I want at ALL*** as if it may materialize if we think hard enough. Apologies, etc, then the recently called employee tells me where to look online for a “MIXER” (*I'm officially done with these chimps and start thinking about where I can buy parts – I'll make the fucking thing already*) and I choose to buy a plastic adaptor of they type every sane person knows, is assured of breaking in six months, due to being USED, for the amazingly low price of \$11.

The clerk INSISTS on testing it and when it comes out of the box we both gasp – the connectors are there alright, but the wiring could easily be a single human hair dipped in Owl Wax – a stiff breeze would snap it in half.

The replacement cable for the Sennheizers is \$45. Being on my third set made it seem like spending \$11 to delay the \$45 was a good idea.

While the clerk is testing them, a greasy, disheveled-teenage-employee arrives and he's four minutes late. His 5'3” jittery boss barks, “***Wherez your name tag?***” The kid stutters, “bubububui...” This greasy kid (and I mean shiny-greasy) starts pleading for mercy as the manager gets on the PA and yells, “**ROBERTA – Will you Please make Joaquin another new badge? Like you did last week?**” and I say to MY clerk, “I can *not fucking wait* to be dead. Jesus.... This is, this is just, just....” ended up shaking my head rather than continue.

*

Arriving at Smith's about 1pm, Friday, I expected a melee of shoppers preparing for a sporting event or maybe some uniquely American, patriotic/christian occasion involving, I dunno, could easily be orange, plastic cowboy hats, individually wrapped, single-serving fruit pies and hate, but the parking lot gave a strong indication they were closed. Hadn't been there for five years and this was a far cry from what I'd anticipated – often, you had to park on the perimeter of the lot and walk the 100 yards to the cart rack, but I parked four spots from the door. The stench of Walmart in the air – I got a big whiff last I was in a barber shop (the thought crossed my mind *'Wonder when people will be able to enjoy a barberly chat at Walmart, those evil Bastards...'*); I think the best idea yet is to capture and eat the Walton family – FOX would broadcast it live – think of the ad revenue.

*

Every Smith's employee I encounter cheerfully greets me, and I mean ALL of them, every single one. every person wearing the store's colors forced themselves to Ooze *good cheer* – it was brutal to witness. Mopping up baby vomit? It can wait! They put it on hold, kinda lunge your direction, smiling **that** smile, going thru the motions for the surveillance cameras, hoping that scaring the fertilizer out of me will win them points on their annual review. I try not to scream when a handshake seems imminent. The store was mine, apparently, and I was singled out for the hearty, “How Ya DOIN?” by boxes of cereal, dairy products, produce all leapt in front of me doing their best to break my spirit, to hammer me with **HELLOS** until it had been established they'd never have to see me again. I think their instructions were to make people cry if possible. Pleasant it was not.

As each row passes, I make the critical decision whether I dare walk the aisle – if I see needed items, I'll toss them in the cart like I'm Joe Millionaire (Graham Crackers? Fuck OFF! Grab the Hipster Farms Chocolate Chip Macadamia Nut Heart Stoppers! I'm buyin' 'em all! The Lear needs re-stocking...) and in another 2 weeks, repeating overdraft fees at the credit union will cause them to demand my expulsion. “*Your ATM card if you would please, SIIIIIRRR...*”

I skip aisle after aisle and force myself to test my inner Ninja when arriving at the cleaning fluids. Facing asphyxiation or an uninvited epileptic seizure by entering, I shoot off a quick prayer to St. Valentine (also the patron saint of epileptics) before running “*the gauntlet of possible light-headedness*” and grab a \$4 mop without stopping.

My hummingbird diet is just that, sugar, sugar and more sugar and I'm steadily losing weight. Had my blood tested for diabetes and my gal said something along the lines of my NEVER having to worry about it – I have some kinda thing in my blood that simply won't let me have the disease.

No-name sodas are all I can afford and love it when *Real Sugar* Pepsi is on sale which is surprisingly often (*Americans want that fancy processed sugar not that nasty right-out-of-the-dirt kind*), but no luck. Kroger comes to my rescue – how can you fuck up Ginger Ale? You have to try pretty hard.

Oddest aisle encountered has baby stuff on one side – diapers, wipes, formula, electrodes, barbed wire and tiny t-shirts with shit like “Top DAWG” on them, enforcing the “*cool to be stupid*” message quite early indeed, with the other side of the aisle mysteriously loaded up with cookies and candy. One side: poop-related tools and impulse items for the new parent with disposable income, the other, dedicated to the hummingbird-human-hybrid.

There was a lady stocking candy, on her knees kinda grumbling. She leaned back surveying the perfect rows she'd just installed, and said to no one, "Okay, what do we have here..." This being the one trip out of the house a month for your humble narrator, I engage at every opportunity and said, "What you have is an aisle for babies to share with sugar-grouches – It's toxic at best... How does this aisle exist..." and was cut off as she quickly went to fetch more sugar, saying, **Not** over her shoulder in a friendly way but to the blank space in front of her as she rushed off, "Yeh, well that side of the aisle isn't my problem." I'd noticed her name tag, *Hagitha*, and decided not to call after her – pinning a rose to her bosom didn't seem that important and there was the fact she'd honored me by not inquiring about my health, had in fact, seemed a little miffed I'd brazenly spoken to her like some Carpet-bagger fresh out of county lock-up. "*Did you see that old hippie man hitting on the candy lady? What a MONSTER.*"

The possibility of me deciding to walk out, leaving a cart-load-o-specials to fend for itself in the freezer section was high until Hagitha set the world back into position. People cheerfully greeting me at six second intervals from unusual angles as they trot past, or they spot me at the other end of the aisle and yell, "HOW ARE YOU TODAY SIR?" is not something I seek in a shopping experience. Did that guy expect me to yell back at him? "I GOTTA TAKE A DUMP WHICH IS RARE FOR ME AND WOULDN'T YA KNOW IT, HERE I AM AT... HEY... HEYYYY!WHERE YA GOIN'?"

Their prices, are embarrassingly lower than those at the Dollar Store, where I usually shop. This means the last couple of years have been spent eating poison when it just wasn't as necessary as I imagined. Not once did I notice a lack of low income throngs clogging the aisles – I mean fuck – I'm not even mildly retarded – how did I not complete that equation? That's where friends come in handy; if they're real friends they'll tell ya when yer acting like a moron.

*

The Friday mid-day shoppers at Smiths are all elderly, all six of them, each in their own slow-motion haze of fear and confusion with items similar to mine – SOFT THINGS.

One guy is eyeing-fucking the Tapioca cups as I grab a 4-pack. He's fingering his fishing hat, poking at his furry ear, tucking his sweater back into his mall-walking-pants, making sure his jacket is ready to be smartly zipped should a draft hunt him down (70 outside, 75 in the hectare sized store) and I ask him in a very secretive tone, "*You know anybody's figgered a way to kill themselves with this crap yet?*" sort of crouched down in front of him, quiet desperation and intensity in my eyes as they locked on his. I held my '*please help me*' pose a beat too long and then vanished leaving him to devise a pudding-based-suicide method on his own.¹

Later he ended up behind me in the frozen foods, and barked, "**Don't move!**" as he maneuvered past my cart, clearly two feet away. It was the perfect setup for my standard public humiliation move: Nice and loud, ya say, "***If you don't stop it I'm telling the Doctor!***" If the store hadn't been a morgue I'd have gotten at least one laugh, I thought better of it and let *Mr. Velcro Loafers* pass unmolested.

*

The store is so empty the *15 Items or Less* guy waves me over, then pages this hulking farm-gal to HELP ME unload my cart. 1. WTF? 2. She'd done this before, had \$100 in discounted sale items on the belt in a flash – damaging each in the process.

... there was no-one behind me, or even in sight. I'm not hobbling around with a walker or anything, I

ain't got no fucking colostomy bag – I can handle it already! The checker had judged me instantly as a slow witted, plastic-vagina-coin-purse-owner that might wanna chat about politics or maybe a Gin Rummy game I'd recently won when playing my great grand daughter. He'll let me break the 15 item rule, but wants me gone as soon as possible. I might have *that smell*.

*

By the time I got home, I was sweating, shaking, in need of sugar. I unloaded everything and found, in my haste I'd made a few silly purchases – flavored bagels (*plain or nothing for me*), the meat smelled funny by the time I got here which makes me nervous and I'd failed to notice the coffee on special was artificially flavored to resemble French Vanilla ice cream.

I got an onion bagel, an organic banana, applesauce (a lot like pudding! HMMMM...?) a soda and some day-old cherry pie in my mouth moments before succumbing to the vapors.

*

Yeh, I'm 60 years old now. I drink less or not at all, went from three packs a day to three days per pack. At 55 I started saying what I mean and meaning what I say, which translates to *I live alone / have no friends*. Just so happens I've hit my creative stride, I'm producing manuscripts, music, visual art on a level I didn't know I was capable of.

Read up on this phenomenon a bit and there it is, every artist worth their salt, anyone that sees creativity as having value, absolutely, positively has to spend a shitload of time alone.

Well FUCK YOU! I knew that shit already – I'm the guy that played guitar six hours a day, every-mother-fucking-day for years. I'm that knucklehead that spent three years having my first cocktail at 7am immediately followed by 10 hours at the typer with the drinks keeping time to the chatter of the keys. Spent another three years preparing for a sell-out, one-man art show I didn't even know was gonna happen, but I did that shit anyway because I had no fucking choice. My family just can't get their heads around it – I'm just following orders.

*

When I see a musician that's an amazing draftsman in conjunction with a knack for improvisation, My statement to anyone caring to listen is, "That's one lonely son of a bitch right there..."

The bottom line is **I'm still in here, I'm still me, my vehicle's exterior has aged is all**. The motor, tranny, chassis – all good as new – the god damn thing starts without a complaint every single time, always has, it used to anyway.

Hell, my knees were fucked before I got outta high school. It seems the rest of my limb-benders recently noticed, a vote was taken, with Early Retirement unanimously agreed upon to be invoked immediately. They're having exotic cocktails out by the pool at the Tiki Bar they helped install when there were people to share it with.

*

Okay, that's fine. A person is the product of their upbringing, life experience and a set of values loosely

defined which they call on to calculate the right way to act in each situation as it arises. Thoughts drive us, not our bodies. I know I'll never fuck again, but I already did a whole buncha sweating and grunting – making that movie over again and tacking on the identical ending just seems silly to me now.

So maybe that's what's at issue here. I don't see myself as fuckable, I give off that vibe, others pick up on it – I'm not a valued sperm donor system, which means I'm not gonna help make more humans and am therefore to be *discounted to mother fucking death*, ignored and shamed into solitude just to avoid getting clobbered by **that look** people give you when you're no longer worthy of the effort it takes to consider your existence – your insignificance now matches that of the non-lethal-pudding-cups of planet earth. I'll discuss technique with ya, but a demonstration of practical application is not forthcoming. I own mirrors and I know for certain that's me looking back when I move past one. I'd not ask another to subject themselves to such a spectacle.

*

Is that really the criteria, the priority-set required for people to acknowledge you without it being some bullshit law where you happen to work?

“Wherez your name tag, asswipe!?!?”

I left it at ***FUCK YOU SHITHEAD!*** Can you ever forgive me sir?

No wonder I never leave my place.....

*

9pm Friday night, no prospects. I'm home, in my command module, at my station waiting for, or rather *fending off* inspiration – I don't want to do anything right now – I'm still making peace with that freakin' onion bagel (Who started that shit? I saw dill pickle flavored potato chips the other day – why was I made to think about that? To imagine a deep-fried, paper-thin hamburger topping? In bags identical to those designed for potato chips? – what if I accidentally buy some? I wouldn't know who to kill nor would I have access to them if I did – lunatic asylums usually don't bestow visiting rights to aging Robert Plant pretenders, especially if they're brandishing a baseball bat).

Should inspiration care to drop by, I think she'll like this, might not realize just how depressing it is...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1TuWsQ1smQo&nohtml5=False>

Footnote:

1. Premise on loan – originated with Master Comedic, Doug Stanhope.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hWF5Pxmtytg>

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